

“Formosa is Ours”: Robert Hart’s Role in the 1874 Taiwan Crisis

Yorgos Moraitis*

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the multifaceted career of Robert Hart, a pivotal figure in 19th-century cross-cultural diplomacy and international relations, renowned for his role as the Inspector General of China’s Imperial Maritime Customs Service. Amidst the intricate negotiations and power dynamics of Qing China’s engagement with the Western world, Hart’s pragmatic approaches emerge as a central theme. This study sheds light on his involvement in resolving the 1874 crisis surrounding Taiwan’s territorial sovereignty, drawing from previously unexplored diaries that uniquely unveil his daily discussions with Qing and Japanese officials during the crisis. While scholarly discourse has focused on the differing notions of sovereignty held by Qing and Japanese officials, this research offers fresh insight into Hart’s integral role in navigating this diplomatic challenge. Moreover, Hart’s pragmatic influence extends beyond diplomacy to Qing military affairs, wherein he championed naval reforms to counter foreign powers’ expansion, as well as his engagement with Qing colonisation efforts in Taiwan.

Keywords: Robert Hart, Hart’s Diaries, International Law, Taiwan, Qing Dynasty, Meiji Japan

* Ph.D., Queen’s University Belfast

來稿日期：2023年8月8日；通過刊登：2023年10月29日。